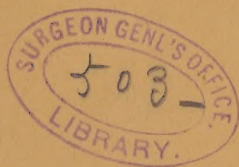
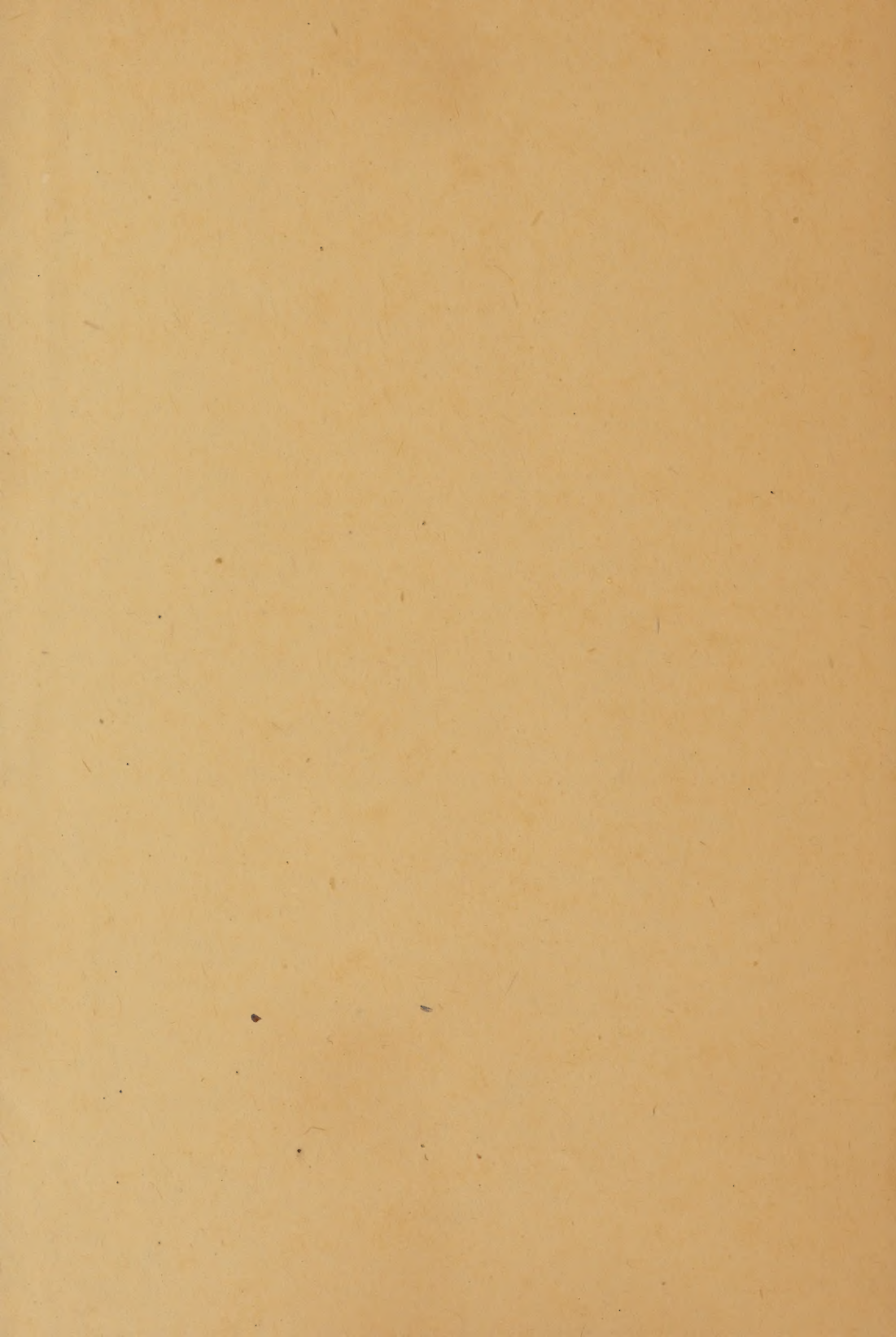


HARGIS (R.B.S.)

Letter to the
Florida Medical Association,

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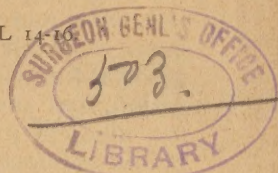


HARGIS (R.B.S.) W. H. Nathan M.D.
With Compliments of Author

LETTER
TO THE
FLORIDA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION,

IN SESSION AT PENSACOLA, FLA., APRIL 14-16

By R. B. S. HARGIS, M. D.



Reprinted from the August, 1891, number of the New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal.

President and Gentlemen of the Florida Medical Association: It is in consequence of a painful indisposition that I have to deplore my inability to meet you and participate in your proceedings during the present session. That you have been duly welcomed to our city and to this hall with becoming honors, does not forbid me the pleasurable duty, as a member of your association, to extend you a kindly greeting and cordial welcome to the hospitalities of our city, and extend the right hand of fellowship due you on the occasion.

Many of you are aware that I for many years have cherished a profound interest in the advancement of the medical sciences and manifested my devotion to the profession by frequent contributions to the medical literature, a few of which were first presented to the profession through your published transactions.

It was my intention to respond promptly to the official notification of the secretary, and present a paper to the association at this meeting, but, unhappily, an engraftment of a severe "grippe" upon my chronic infirmity prevented me. I hope, however, that a kind Providence will vouchsafe to me sufficient health and strength to finish one I have in hand and present it to you ere long through another channel or at your next meeting.

Gentlemen, this noble organization, the Florida Medical Association, has been to me an object of deep and abiding interest and a prolific source of valuable knowledge, and I do most heartily congratulate you on the varied and important successes that have crowned your noble efforts to advance the medical sciences, and effect means to improve the physical condition of the people. Since its organization it has been so conducted as to give a united and emphatic expression to the

views and aims of the medical profession throughout the State: and the professional mind in other States has been at no time more active, and although their means and aids from intelligent and influential outside influences have been infinitely greater the results have not been of larger utility or intrinsic value.

This association must, at all times, exercise a beneficial influence, and supply a more efficient means than have hitherto been available in our State, for cultivating and advancing medical knowledge, for elevating the standard of medical education, and promoting the usefulness, honor and interests of the medical profession; and while it enlightens and directs public opinions in regard to the duties, responsibilities and requirements of medical men, it excites and encourages emulation and concert of action in the profession, and facilitates and fosters friendly intercourse between those engaged in it.

The transactions of your last meeting at Ocala, as indicated in your published proceedings of that session promises much for the future. On reviewing it carefully with a view to examine it critically, I was deeply impressed with the precise parliamentary order of proceedings, but the work of the associations as manifested in the various papers read before it on that occasion clearly indicated that, alive to medical progress and to the interests of the State and of humanity it aspires to the conservation and perfection of the good and true of our noble profession.

The different papers bear the marks of judicious and appropriate selections of subjects and painstaking in their preparation. Taken separately or as a whole, these papers would do credit to any medical organization in this or any other country. Your proceedings should be more widely circulated amongst the people, that they may behold the results of your labors. Your "light should not be hidden under a bushel." Many, however, of intelligence and influence have borne witness to the good practical results already manifested, and fully appreciate their inestimable value. The establishment of the present Board of Medical Examiners, which has already shown itself to be a powerful protective means of rescuing the people from the hands of unscrupulous quacks. The establishment of our State Board of Health is due to the influence of the Florida Medical Association, and the institution and practical application of sanitary measures, involving many valuable suggestions relating to quarantine, are due to its influence. The Florida Medical Association is an authority on State medicine, and should be widely known as such. I am not giving utterance to words suggested by a spirit of vain adulation or obsequious patronage. I speak the language of *truth, verum atque*

deus. Ours, gentlemen, in the words of the immortal Stokes, "is a noble profession; the only one relating to earth-born things which, while it ennobles the mind of man, softens and expands his heart, whose end is good to man. It is these god-like qualities of our profession that stimulates its votaries in the pursuit of truth and the practise of benevolence. The only enemies we combat are error and disease. In assiduously cultivating the powers of discovering truth and the desire of applying it for the promotion of human happiness, we have the great end and object of our existence. In our contest, then, with error and disease we enter into to no compromise with evil, and the good we do to our fellow creatures never involves injustice to another."

The life of the medical practitioner is one of ceaseless battle not in combating disease, but to counteract the life-invading influences that men put in action. Against Nature's law we do not presume to contend, "all that is born must die." But medicine has clearly enough shown that at least three-fourth of those who perish, succumb to causes more or less due to the carelessness or ignorance of man; visit that hospital not far off, enter its wards, there you will first see a patient sick with fever or consumption, a victim to foul air emanating from the sewage or some filthy excavation, or lake sodden soil reeking with decomposing organic matter or engendered in his cramped and overshadowed dwelling, never purified by the living atmosphere or the rays of the sun. The next is one whose limbs are fractured, or who has sustained some other injury, which benevolence directed by science might have averted. Further on is another one whose energies are destroyed and spirit broken, whose body is diseased, whose mind is debaffed by indulgence in those "accursed drinks where use is abuse, whose purity is foulness, to adulterate is a superfluous or positive fraud."

These are but very tew of the evils we have to combat in civil life. For this we never relax our efforts to acquire increased knowledge. The fascination which Nature exercises over the diciples of the healing art explains much in the conduct of the practitioner of medicine in which is either incomprehensible to the public or often misconstrued. The common incentive to labor among the people generally is the love of gain; the intermediate motive to exertion is money. It is very true that they may be a stimulus in the love of action. Slothfulness to most men is intolerable. Some kind of exercise for the muscles and the brain is necessary to the meanest enjoyment of life. But we may safely affirm that the truth of the maxim *Labor ipse voluptas* is by no means so thoroughly appreciated as by the physician. In the exercise of his vocation,

he not only exults in the sense of healthy and honorable exertion, but he is gratified by the consciousness that he is extending acquisitions and enlarging the powers of the intellect; he feels not only the pride of new conquests, but the ever new excitement of expectation.

Medicine is essentially a progressive science. It is progressive as an abstract branch of knowledge; it is progressive as regards every individual who follows it as a profession—the physician is always and above all a student. Deprive him of the means of observing disease and you render him unhappy. Not because he is enamored with pus, miasm and microbes, still less the sight of human agony has any attraction; not because the employment is profitable in a pecuniary sense; he is unhappy because he feels that without the opportunity of observation the knowledge he possesses will decay, the faculties which are strengthened by exercise will be lost. With all his industry and zeal the physician may not find wealth but he surely will find happiness and competency. If, indeed, we do have few splendid prizes, if there be but few great fortunes amongst us, so there are but few reverses. It is one of the immunities we enjoy to a large extent with the other learned professions, that we are tolerably secure from those calamities which the errors and misfortunes of others so often entail upon those engaged in commerce and speculation. There is, perhaps, hardly any profession in which a man need depend so little for success upon extraneous aid. So long as he enjoys the blessing which is his aim to dispense to others, the physician approaches most nearly to the Horatian standard of freedom and independence, the man "*ipse totus, atque ro-* *terus*
tundus."

This you may say is the bright side of the question. It has, no doubt, a reverse one—a side not without asperities and shadows; upon this, however, I think it unmanly and unbecoming to dwell. "Success rarely attends the garrulous man." We'll all, no doubt, have our difficulties and disappointments, our days of expectation, our hours of despondency. In all this I, *more* than most men, can sympathize. But unalloyed prosperity is not the lot of man, nor indeed is it good for man. The true use of present adversity is to chasten and strengthen the mind for new struggles, to teach us to look hopefully into the future, not alone of this life but of the "life beyond the grave."

I can not forbear to repeat in conclusion, as a sort of summary of the text, what I said on a former occasion: The object of our Association is to further the interests of our great profession and of humanity. It is well to keep a high standard of excellence in view, and it is to be hoped that the

link shown to exist between the medical minds of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and leading inventions of the eighteenth and nineteenth may inspire all to hope for solid advances in sciences by increasing devotion and observation on the part even of overworked practitioners. Medicine has proved itself resplendent in the past. Let each and all of us not *dim* the *lens* which, converging the rays of the past, almost threatens to blind us. We have but one course to pursue and that is *onward!*

Faithfully yours,

R. B. S. HARGIS, M. D.

109 East Romana St., Pensacola, Fla.

